# OFFSHORE OPERATIONS

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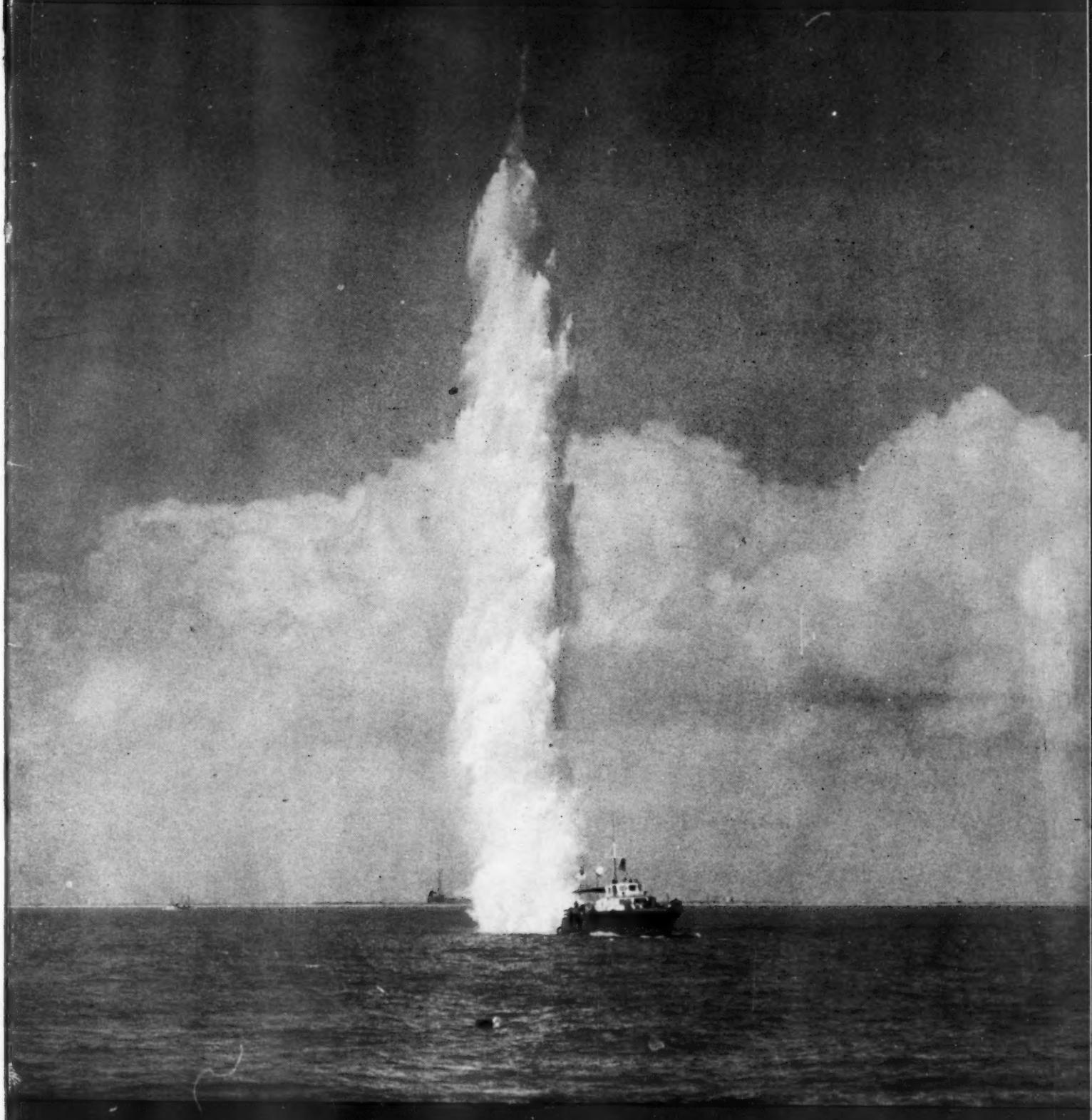

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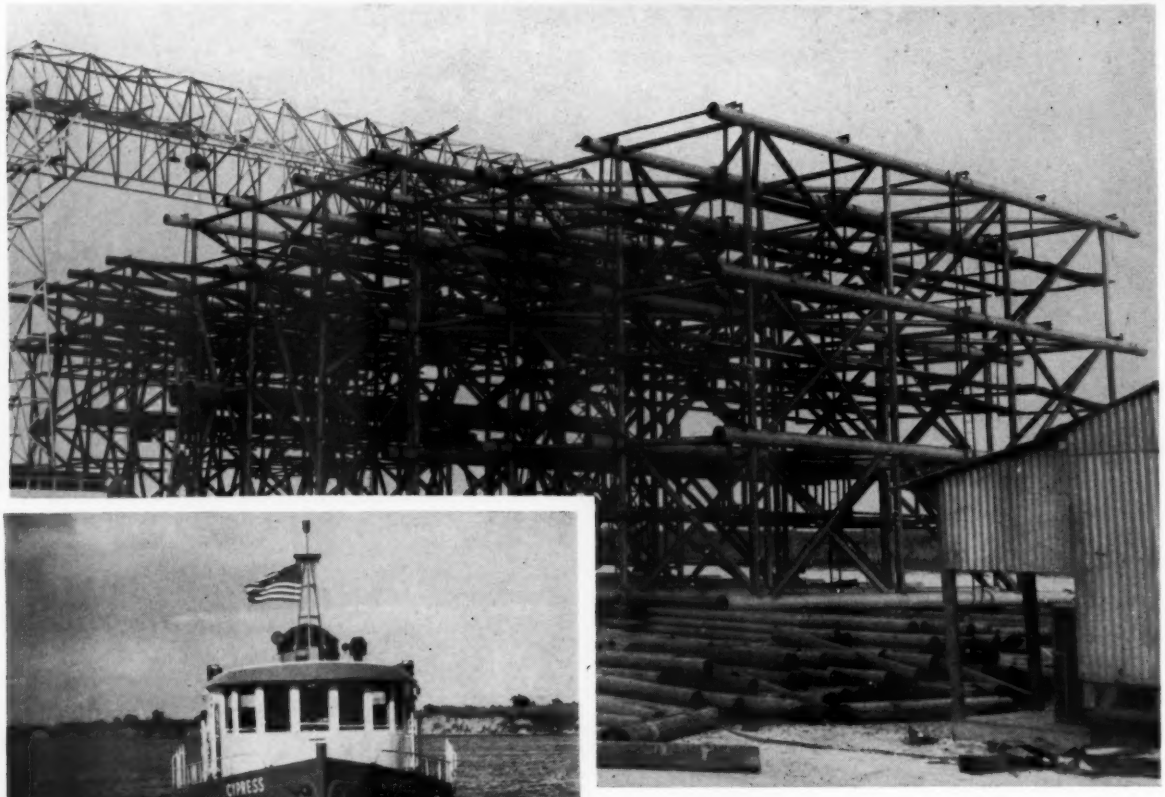

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# OFFSHORE OPERATIONS

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*Cover courtesy of the Humble Oil & Refining Co.*
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# The Boll Weevil Sez:

WHEN does a fellow stop being a "greenhorn" around a rig?

Maybe never. It's like a little ol' well we drilled in one time, down the holler a-ways from a couple of whiskey stills. Booger came in making 3 bbls. an hour. That's 72 bbls. per day, just in case your arithmetic is bad. But while we were out shopping for fish-tailed Cadillacs, it turned into one of the finest salt water wells you ever saw in your life.

Fellow came up from Texas (this was in a northern state) to look things over. He sniffed, tasted, squatted, walked around, went through the whole process all over again—and then laughed right out loud.

"Why, you've still got an oil well," he said, "—if you just knew what to do about it!"

We didn't know what to do about it, so that left us strictly in the boll weevil class. Besides, by then we were short on both money and temper. And you couldn't have hand-picked every sheep camp in Texas and come up with partners shorter on oil savvy than the ones we had. So we left it—and left a lot of stuck pipe in the ground—which maybe explains why we keep labeling this column "The Boll Weevil Sez."

That's us!

---

We might as well confess something else, too. Used to write western stories for a living. Hundreds of them, along with adventure yarns, travel articles, and one book (LONESOME LONGHORN, Westminster Press, $2.50 the last we heard). Doing that sort of thing, you're always happy to run across a man with a tale to tell. A good tale-collector thinks nothing of dropping down into Mexico, or maybe driving all the way to Arizona, to look up a man who spins a good yarn.

Which brings us to Johnny Wiech.

---

R. L. "Red" Shibley tells the story. Red and Johnny have the Marine Service Co. in Houston. Exploration boats and that sort of thing.

They'd taken delivery on a new boat, according to Red. Red was down in the hold, working, and Johnny was topside when the young lady reporter came on board. She wanted a story, and some pictures, for the local newspaper.

Johnny gave her a good story, adding, "My partner's really the one you ought to write about. Used to be a Shakesperian actor. Got tired of the stage and retired to the sea. Why, he's played before all the crowned heads of Europe!"

The young lady, impressed, wrote the story exactly as Johnny Wiech gave it to her, and it was duly printed. Red remonstrated with his partner—using strong language and the threat of a monkey wrench—and Johnny piously promised not to tell the story again.

He kept his promise.

When the partners launched a second boat, the same young lady of the press appeared. Johnny confessed that he'd been pulling her leg a bit. Red hadn't actually been a Shakesperian actor—he'd been a musician. He'd played the piano in one place for five years before he found out what was going on upstairs. Then he quit.

The story was printed verbatim, Red says, and we quit too.

—Long John Latham


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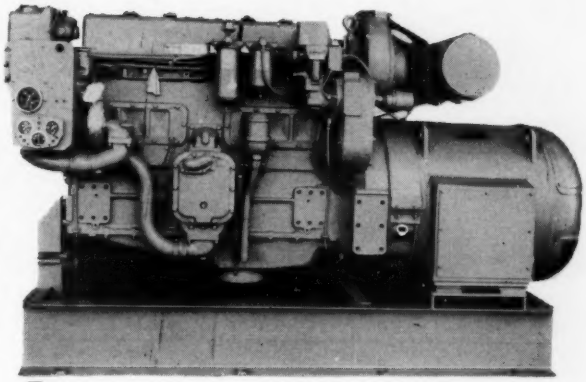

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# *Offshore Outlook . . .*

Not long ago, an estimate was made that for a 12-month period beginning Nov. 1, the oil industry would spend $100 million—or more dramatically, nearly $12 thousand per hour—on offshore exploration and development.

In the light of subsequent events, these figures should be re-examined.

The full-fledged boom, long predicted, is now underway. Operations are expanding rapidly in the Gulf of Mexico. The Oct. 13 sale of leases in federal waters off the coast of Louisiana brought a record $129 million; the Nov. 7 sale of leases in federal waters off the coast of Texas added another $23 million to the figure.

This high-priced acreage can't remain idle. In this connection it should be mentioned that a big new multi-million dollar mobile rig, capable of drilling in water depths up to 100 feet, has been recently commissioned, and other sea-going rigs for both medium and deep-water operation are being rushed to completion. Many companies and combines of companies have offshore programs that are just getting under way.

In the biggest gamble ever taken by private industry oil companies are spending a conservative $35 thousand per hour on leases, exploration and new equipment for the Gulf alone. In cold, hard figures, the industry will spend a staggering $300 million in the 12-month period starting Nov. 1, and it is only by the use of such sums that the massive scope and scale of current offshore operations can be realized.

The 'whys' are big, too. By taking this unprecedented risk the industry hopes to add a whopping 6 billion or more barrels of oil to our national reserves, and 15,- or 20,000 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. But the question still remains—why take the gamble?

There can be little doubt that Gulf leases have proven ultra-expensive wildcat acreage. The initial outlay for equipment, before a single well can be drilled, is exceedingly high. Add to that the fact that we already have an excess of oil, proration, as well as competition of low-priced crude oil from foreign sources—and you may decide that oil company executives should head **en masse** for the couch of the nearest psychiatrist.

But while the oil industry is taking a gigantic risk, it is a calculated risk. Operations in the Gulf are telescoped. Normal operations that would take many years on land are being crammed into just a few years at sea—but it will still take several years to develop large-scale production in the stormy waters of the Gulf.

By then the oil companies are confident that their big reserves will be needed. Instead of the atom replacing oil, they expect domestic demand for oil to increase. Taking the long-range viewpoint, the oil industry considers the gamble worth while and the offshore outlook bright indeed.

—The Editor


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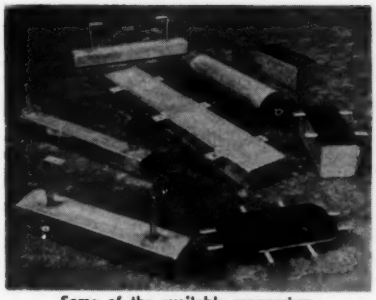

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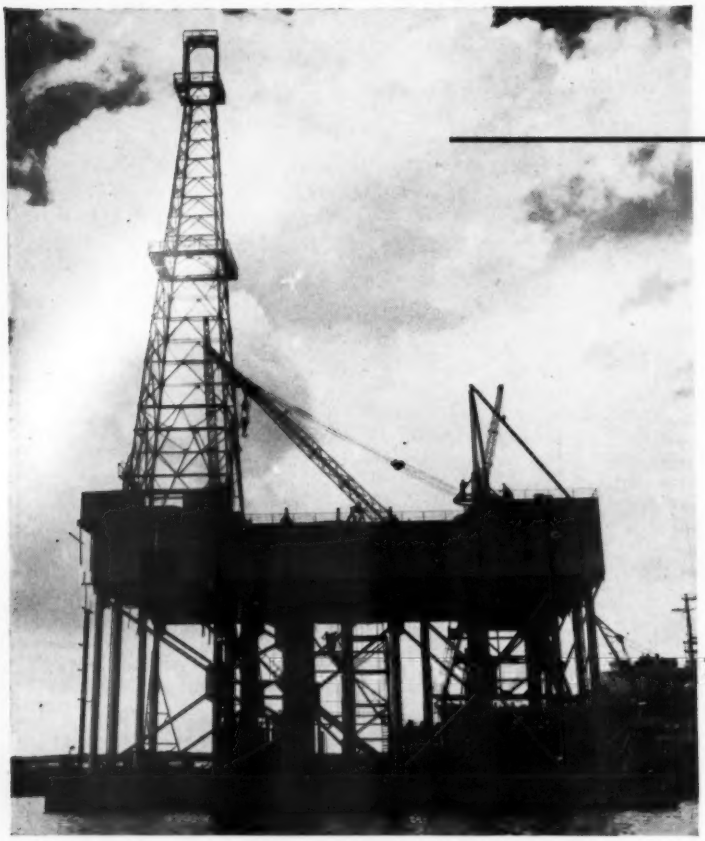

# Seagoing Skyscraper

Kermac Rig 44, built by The Ingalls Shipbuilding Corporation at its Pascagoula, Miss., yard, soon will join the multibillion-dollar search for oil in the Gulf tidelands.

The rig, towering more than 225 feet above the water at impressive commissioning ceremonies, was constructed for Kerr-McGee Oil Industries, Inc., Oklahoma City, pioneer in the development of the tidelands oil reserves.

This offshore submersible mobile drilling platform can work in water 40 feet deep. Among its modern facilities are air-conditioned crew quarters for 42 men.

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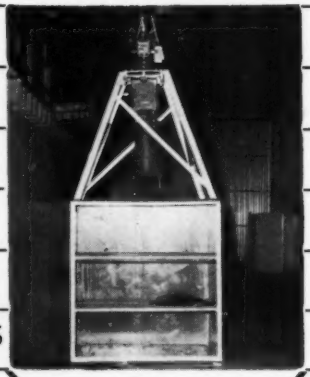

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# THIS MONTH . . . . . OFFSHORE

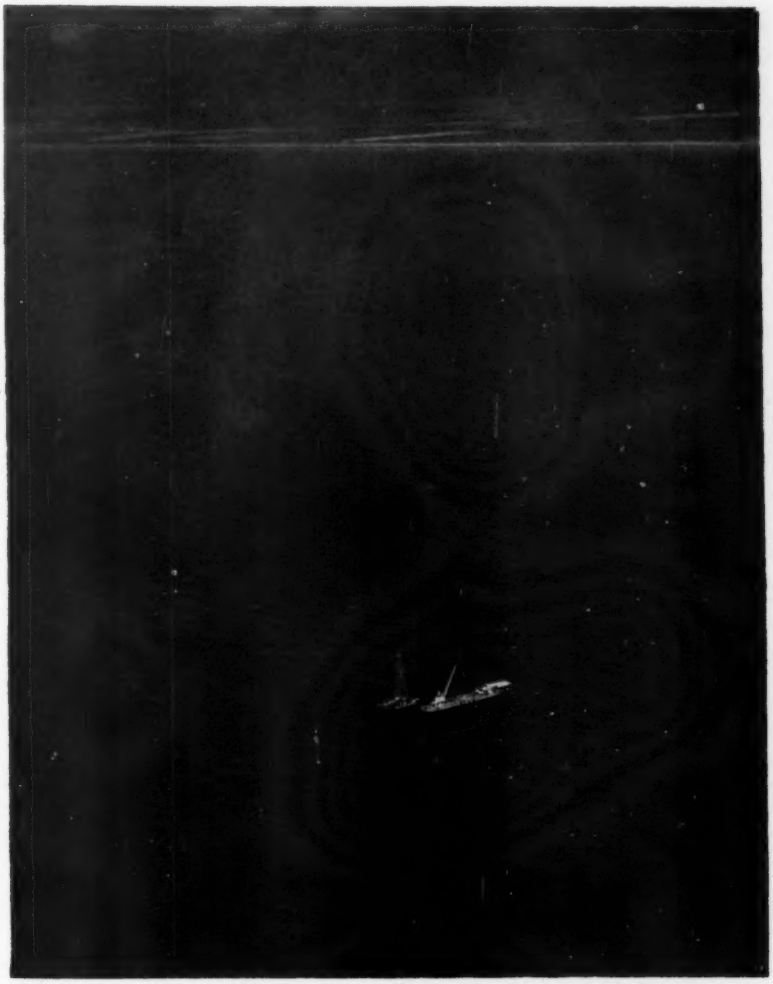
WASHINGTON—The first sale of oil and gas leases in federal waters off the Texas coast netted more than $23 million, according to an announcement by the Department of Interior (*See story on page 20*).

TEXAS—Tide Water Associated Oil Co. has opened a new oil field in Galveston Bay, at its No. 1 State Tract 102, offshore Chambers County, Texas. The well flowed 177 bbls. daily on drillstem test from 8587-93 feet.

BATON ROUGE—Oil companies holding leases from the federal government on Louisiana submerged lands within the 3 league limit face the threat of court action if drilling operations are undertaken. Nine Louisiana parishes along the coast have banded to presss suits, to protect the state's claim to the tidelands area between the 2-mile and 10.5-mile limit.

WASHINGTON — The outcome of Kerr-McGee's effort to void 12 bids made in the October sale of leases in federal waters off the coast of Louisiana is still in doubt . . . Kermac contends that due to a clerical error, bids were submitted by tract numbers instead of block numbers. The company has asked that 9 of the bids, totaling more than $14 million, be withdrawn and the deposit of nearly $3 million be refunded. These represent the bids on which Kerr-McGee was high . . . The Interior Department has referred the matter to the comptroller general for a ruling.

LOUISIANA — Conoco has tapped a new gas pool in the tidelands, at its No.1-A State Lease 1208 in the Gulf of Mexico off Cameron Parish . . . Calco will extend its Bay Marchand field, the largest field offshore. The company has 50 producing wells in the area, with a daily output of nearly 8,000 bbls. and plans have been announced for the drilling of at least 16 more wells. Two new offshore structures will accommodate the drilling program . . . Continental has made location for three new wildcats in the Gulf of Mexico — in the West Delta area off Plaquemines Parish, fifteen miles offshore from Jefferson Parish in the Grand Isle area, and in the East Cameron area off Cameron Parish . . . Kerr-McGee and Southwest Natural will drill a 12,000-ft. test in the vicinity of the Main Pass Block 35 field . . . The California Co. will drill a 14,000-ft. wildcat in the West Delta Block 30 area off Plaquemines Parish . . . Shell has made location for a wildcat in the South Pass Block 27 area . . . Work is progressing on the World's longest undersea pipeline (*Offshore Operations, November, 1954*). The 48-mile long 12-in. line will serve Block 126 of the Eugene Island field. Magnolia Petroleum Co. will operate the line for the Magnolia-Newmont-Continental Combine.



**This lonely platform and tender, set against sea and sky, graphically illustrates the isolation of an offshore drilling operation. This is an Humble location, near St. Joseph Island off the coast of Texas.**

TEXAS — The first mobile drilling platform capable of operation in 100-ft. of water has been commissioned by the C. G. Glasscock Drilling Co. of Corpus Christi, Texas. **Mr. Gus** is now on location for a deep wildcat near Freeport, Texas. The giant twin-hull unit could conceivably drill 100 miles from land off the eastern tip of Texas, where the gentle slope of the ocean's floor pushes the 100-ft. mark far out on the continental shelf . . . Magnolia Petroleum Co. becomes the first oil firm in the nation to own its own helicopter . . . Magnolia has purchased a Bell Model 47G to shuttle supervisory personnel and small supplies to its drilling operation in the Gulf of Mexico near Sabine Pass. Other oil companies have used helicopters, but on a rental or charter basis. Magnolia is the first company to own and operate one . . . Gov. Allan Shivers has designed Nov. 29-Dec. 4 as "Oil and Gas Conservation Week." The special recognition coincides with the meeting in Chicago on Dec. 4 of the Interstate Oil Compact Commission.

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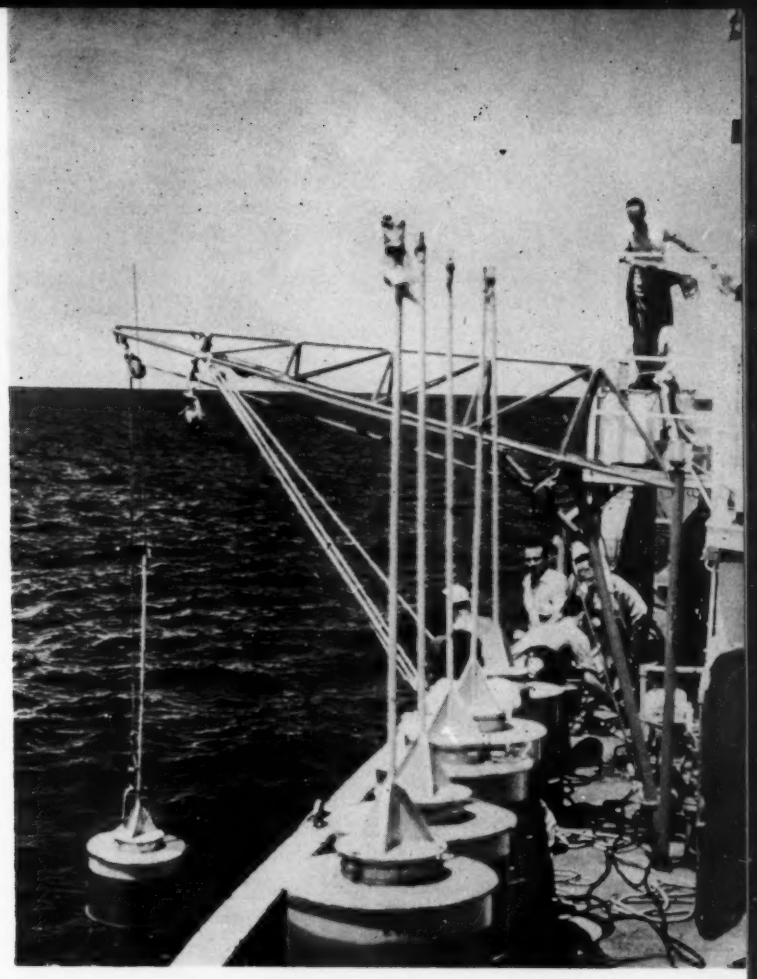


**Setting out sonobuoys, location devices, from the MV SONIC, equipped for GSI's single-ship seismic operation.**

# Geology And Geophysics Of Offshore Exploration

by FREDERICK ROMBERG
Geophysical Service Inc.

OFFSHORE exploration was long regarded by oil companies as a rich and virgin territory awaiting exploitation. The all-out drive to discover reserves in this new territory was delayed by political events until two years ago, but it is now in full swing. Offshore exploration has become a dominant phase of the search for oil.

The geological problems that have to be solved in offshore exploration are essentially the same as the problems on land, but with the big difference that thirty years of work has to be condensed into ten or even five. First in point of interest, naturally, are the salt domes. Geologists and geophysicists find themselves faced with the task of exploring an immense area, containing perhaps as many salt domes as the neighboring land area, with the methods of 1954 instead of those of 1927. The techniques of reflection shooting, continuous profiling and fault interpretation, undreamed of in 1927, permit the mapping of salt domes and adjacent areas in much greater detail than was done a quarter of a century ago. This makes the problem of where to drill incomparably easier, but the advantage of better prospecting methods is offset for oil producers by the high competitive cost of leasing, by the colossal engineering problems of drilling, and by unknown hazards of fire, hurricanes, and last but not least, possible legal difficulties.

It seems reasonable to suppose that the future course of offshore geological exploration will be similar to the course it has taken on land, except that everything will go faster. Shallow salt domes will be drilled first, then deep ones, then possible traps around salt domes, then anticlines or fault structures apparently not related to domes, and then finally stratigraphic and lithologic traps. These last are naturally in the future and will have to wait on cheaper leases, easier drilling methods and longer experience.

The geophysicist has found new problems in computing and interpre-

(Continued on next page)

tation. Data from gravity, reflections and refractions are used simultaneously instead of one after the other to evaluate prospects. Particular problems have come up with respect to the vast amount of information that can be obtained by a marine seismic crew shooting three of four thousand profiles per month. This is ten to fifteen times what a good land or marsh crew can do, and yet an interpretation must be made just as quickly and just as responsibly as on a land party where the seismologist submits an up-to-date report once or twice a week. No matter how many seismologists there are, or how large an office is set up, interpretation frequently falls weeks behind production, and this may be a serious handicap in the competitive race for oil lands.

### The Author

**Frederick Romberg received his B.S. degree from the U. of Texas in 1929. He spent a year in the geophysical department of the Humble Oil & Refining Co., and a year as a tutor in the physics department at Harvard, where he received his Master's degree. In 1933 he was employed by Geophysical Service Inc., and is now southern division manager for the company at Houston, Texas. He is a member of Seismological Society of America, Sigma Xi, and first vice-president of the Houston Section of the Society of Exploration Geophysicists.**

Geophysical laboratories and contracting companies are working as hard as they can on solutions for this problem which do not involve setting up a large office. One attack is to take reproducible records. The advantage of reproducible records is that much more information may be put on the original recording by shooting with wide open filters. Then on reproduction the best filter or even a series of best filters, may be used. In addition, reproducible recording provides a permanent record which can be processed over and over again as new methods of record processing are invented.

A second attack on the problem is by automatic plotting. An automatic plotter takes records as they come from the field and plots them automatically on a cross section on which reflections can be observed directly without computation, just as though they had been computed and plotted in the ordinary manner.

Other automatic processing devices are being worked on and will be applied to future interpretation in an increasing degree as their inventors succeed in making them practical.

In conclusion, the geology and geophysics of offshore exploration are like those of land exploration with the dimensions of time enormously compressed and that of quantity enormously increased. These have changed the techniques of regular exploration into an industry that is as new to us today as reflection shooting was to us in 1930, and refractions in 1924.

**Shooting boat, a member of the seismic fleet, heads out to sea.**

# The Techniques Of

by WILLIAM H. NEWTON
General Geophysical Co.

"THEY JUST pop up like mushrooms."

That's how a veteran airline pilot who flies a Gulf Coast run referred to the drilling platforms and barges which attest to the magnitude of the oil play going on in the Gulf of Mexico.

This airman's phraseology is perhaps vivid, certainly colorful. Yet it strays more than a little from the narrow lane of accuracy. With those platforms and barges — unlike Topsy — it is far from a matter of "just growed." The drilling of every offshore well represents the culmination of an investment that, in all probability, runs into millions of dollars, and a great deal of thought and hard work must precede determination of each well site.

### The Author

**William H. Newton, safety engineer for General Geophysical Co., is a graduate of the U. of Michigan. He is a member, Society of Exploration Geophysicists; member, Standing Comm. on Safety, S.E.G.; associate member, American Society of Safety Engineers; member, Houston Geophysical Society. His duties include gravity interpretation, and he is in charge of all velocity survey interpretation. He is 35, and served 4 years as pilot with the USAAF during World War II.**

Virtually every offshore location is based upon the best available geophysical data. This type of information is even more important offshore than it is on land, since the limited number of tidelands wells gives the geologist very little subsurface information to use in making his studies.

Three major geophysical methods are available to offshore operators: magnetometer, gravity meter and seismograph. In terms of number of parties at work, the reflection seismograph is the most important geophysical exploration tool in the Tidelands. However, a considerable amount of gravity work has been done in the Gulf, and a limited amount of air-

# Offshore Exploration

borne magnetometer surveying has been accomplished.

Basically, there are two types of offshore seismograph operation: the single-boat crew and the multiple-boat crew. The one-boat crew has recording and shooting units on one large vessel. This ship tows the recording cable, which is equipped with built-in detectors, and drops charges astern at controlled intervals. Charges are detonated with the vessel underway, and it is possible to obtain one seismogram every 90 seconds. The type of ship used by this crew is large enough to withstand exceedingly rough weather and can remain at sea for long periods.

Primary disadvantage of the one-boat method is the fact that the ship used represents such a huge investment that it must be employed on long-term programs in order to achieve maximum economic benefits. Further, the long periods at sea inevitably present a morale problem among personnel.

The multiple-boat crew is the most popular for Gulf work. On this type of party, recorders and shooters are carried on separate vessels; a third boat may be used for supply and surveying purposes. This type of operation also employs detectors built into a cable which is dragged behind the recording boat. The recording boat stops for each shot, the charge being thrown or dropped from the shooting boat when it is a controlled location with respect to the cable.

**The chief of a geophysics crew exploring off Louisiana stands by as a charge is detonated.**

With a much lower capital investment, the multiple-boat seismic party can attain peak efficiency on shorter programs than the one-boat party. Personnel skills and technicians have been developed to the point where this type of crew can compete production-wise with the one-boat crew even on very long-term jobs. Depending on spacing of shot locations, a multiple-boat crew can secure one seismogram every 90 to 180 seconds if weather conditions are satisfactory. This type of party is hampered by a need to return to base fairly frequently for supplies and personnel change as well as to find shelter from weather.

Regardless of the type of operation, seagoing doodlebuggers are faced with three common problems: recording, surveying and safety hazards.

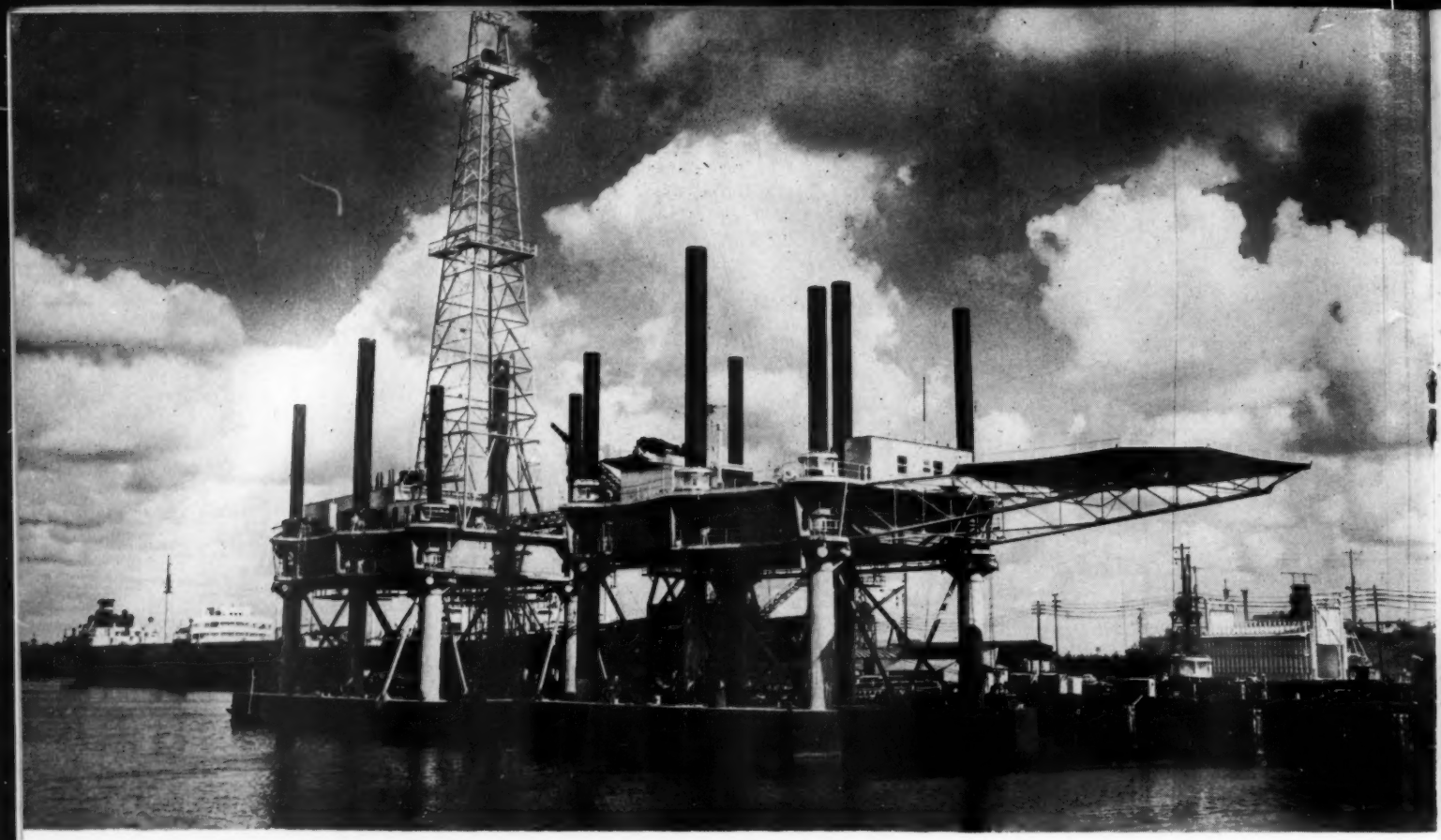
Recording is a problem because economy of operation offshore depends upon high production totals. Unlike a land party, the offshore unit cannot "sit" on a shot hole while the observer varies filter settings in an attempt to improve record quality; any "reshoot" means a major break in routine. It is this routine that makes possible year-round monthly production averages of 500 to 900 miles of continuous profile.

It doesn't do much good to find a structure if no one is certain of precisely where it is located. Surveying has been a major "headache" to offshore operators for many years, and some jobs have been completely reworked because of known or suspected surveying errors. Development of precision electronic methods has done much to solve this problem, and today the operator has a choice among reliable methods. Lorac and Raydist are the most popular surveying methods in use offshore today. Shoran is less popular because of characteristics which make it a primarily short-range method. Other systems which have been used include Loran, sonic (employing sonobuoys), dead reckoning, wire line, radar, triangulation. Many multiple boat crews use their third vessel to check the survey unit carried on the recording boat.

Any men who spend the greater part of their lives on top of a boatload of a substance designed to blow up are faced with a king-size hazard.

(Continued on page 22)

**Clues to what lies below the bottom of the Gulf are revealed in the wavy lines of seismograph recordings.**



***Unveiled in Beaumont . . .***

# Glasscock Commissions "Mr. Gus"

**Bethlehem-built platform is the first mobile unit capable of drilling in 100 feet of water**

THE FIRST mobile drilling platform capable of operation in water depths up to 100-ft. has been commissioned by the C. G. Glasscock Drilling Company of Corpus Christi, Texas, and is now on its first location near San Luis Pass off Galveston Island.

The giant double unit, built by Bethlehem Steel Company's shipbuilding division in Beaumont, Texas, represents a radical departure from conventional type drilling barges now in use offshore. The Glasscock rig — christened **"Mr. Gus"** after the company's president — combines the free-floating characteristics of the mobile platform with the stability and storm-resistant advantages of a fixed structure.

The twin-hull barge-mounted rig, built at an approximate cost of $3½ million, is actually comprised of two separate units—a double-decked drilling platform and service platform connected by a 70' bridge. When the integrated unit is positioned on location, piling is dropped through access tubes into the ocean floor. By an ingenius arrangement of hydraulic jacks, the piling is forced into the subsoil to a depth of 50' to 150' by applying the weight of each platform with equipment to two diagonally-opposite piles at a time. When the desired penetration has been achieved, the platform decks are clamped to the piling and the barge foundations are flooded and submerged. The hulls are pressed firmly against the ocean floor by hydraulic jack action, and men go down the access tubes and remotely clamp the hulls and template tubes to the piling.

Once the piling has been driven and the unit is operating as a fixed structure, it can withstand 50' waves in 100' of water, and hurricane blasts of wind up to 125 mph. Free-floating, the Glasscock rig can withstand 20' waves and 75 mph winds.

During drilling operations, each corner of the two platforms is supported by a cylindrical steel piling handled by a yoke at the deck. The yoke acts like a giant hand which can hold or release, push down with a force of 827 tons, or pull up with a force of 942 tons. In principle the yoke is similar to an oil-field "slip" with double-acting wedges operated by toggle mechanism. Hydraulic cylinders, with a 20-in. inside diameter, operate at a pressure of 3,000 psi to move each yoke up and down.

To move to a new location, the barge hulls are raised to support the platforms, and the corner pilings are pulled by the hydraulic aparatus acting against the buoyancy of the hulls. Jetting connections are available to assist in freeing the piling. If this fails, the piling can be burned off or freed by the use of a shapel charge. With the piling raised to clear the ocean floor, the unit is ready to be towed to a new location.

**Dimensions** . . . The drilling and service platforms are identical in size, measuring 96' x 66' x 12'. The hull foundation beneath the drilling plat-

form is 106′ x 80′ x 15′. The service platform hull is 94′ x 80′ x 15′. The drilling platform weighs 2052 tons, and the service platform 1859 tons.

The access tubes are 60″ O. D. and 170′ long. The piling is 4′ in diameter and 280′ long, of 1¼″ high-tensile steel, stress relieved.

There are two sets of clamps on each corner piling. The lower set is about 3′ above the bottom of the foundation, and the upper set is at the top of the piling tube. The clamps are actuated mechanically from the access tubes and serve to fix the piling in horizontal relation to the barge hull foundation.

### Drilling For Shell —

Shell Oil Co. has **Mr. Gus** under lease, and the new mobile platform is now drilling a deep wildcat for the company on State Tract 249, offshore from Galveston County, Texas, and 17 miles northeast of Freeport. Associated with Shell in the venture are Pure, Humble, Ohio and Melben.

**Auxiliaries** . . . **Mr. Gus** is equipped with a 140′ derrick, capable of drilling to 15,000′. Engines are GM 6-71 diesels, with 130 continuous hp. There are two twins for generators on the drilling platform, four quads for drawworks and pumps, and twins for generators on the service platform. Each platform has two 150 kw a-c generators. Maximum mud pressure that can be built up by the pumps is 3,750-4,000 psi.

The rig has a 35-ton crane to aid in the erection of production platforms, install additional piling, and handle pipe and supplies. A 6-ton crane handles pipe, supplies, and transfers personnel from crew boats to the platform.

Auxiliary services include Schlumberger and Halliburton units and cement storage for well cementing.

**Storage facilities** . . . **Mr. Gus** has storage facilities for 240 bbls. of reserve mud, 1,500 bags of cement, 2,850 sacks of bulk mud, 500 sacks of sack mud, 666 bbls. of active mud, 13,090 bbls. of fresh water, and 340 tons of pipe. Fresh water and fuel tanks are located in the hull foundations, as well as pump rooms containing the necessary ballast and transfer pumps to submerge and raise the twin hulls.

**Accommodations** . . . The Glasscock Drilling Company's new mobile unit has total accommodations for 31 persons, and a completely electric equipped galley for feeding 35 people. All quarters are air-conditioned, and heated by the same system in cold weather. An electric washer and dryer is provided for the men, and the mess room serves as a recreation room during off-tour hours.

The rig has an adequate fire-fighting system, ship-to-shore radiotelephone, FM transmitter and receiver for oil company communications, and sound powered telephones for internal communications.

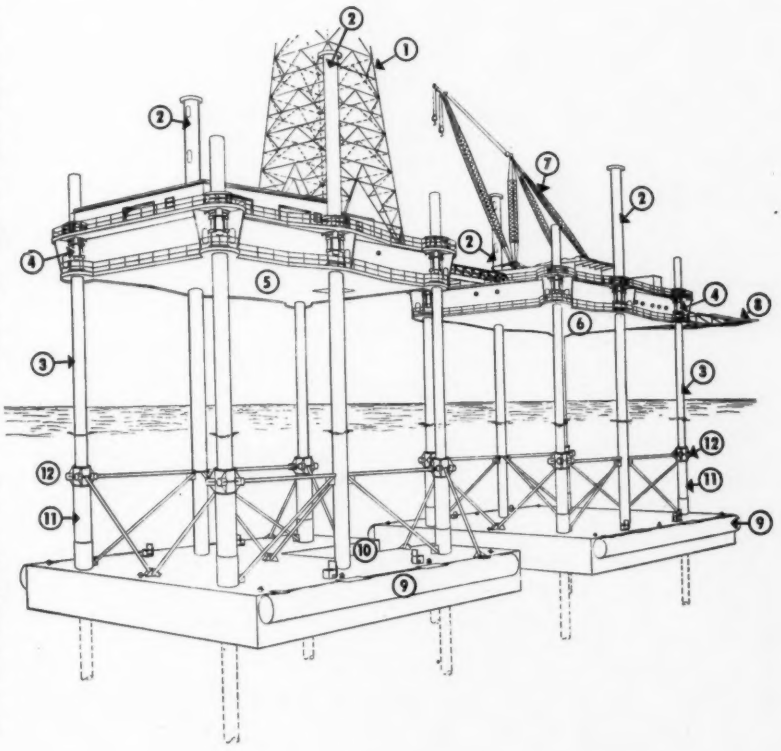
**History** . . . The C. G. Glasscock Drilling Co. has many firsts in the field of over-water operations.

The company drilled the discovery well in Shamrock Bay near Corpus Christi, Texas, back in 1948 — and took two months to build an island and construct a platform, and six more months to complete the well.

Searching for a more efficient and economical method of operation, the company ordered its first drilling barge in 1949. While this represented a major gamble for an independent — and was the first drilling barge to be used in the area — it was successful; with it the firm completed six wells in as many months.

The pioneering firm now owns six shallow-water barges for inshore drilling, and the commissioning of the first mobile unit capable of drilling in a record-breaking 100′ depth of water seems a fitting achievement for C. G. "Gus" Glasscock, Sr., after whom **Mr. Gus** was named. "Mister Gus" is president of the company. J. C. Storm and C. G. Glasscock, Jr., co-owners, have helped direct the company's marine operations since its first over-water venture, and both were instrumental in the design and construction of the new mobile drilling platform.

**Broader horizons** . . . The history-making new Glasscock unit opens for economical development a much broader horizon of the continental shelf. At the eastern tip of Texas — not far from its present location — it could conceivably drill more than seventy-five miles from shore in the open waters of the Gulf. The 100′ mark does not occur until that distance is reached, due to the gradual slope of the ocean's floor. With its new approach to the problems of mobility as well as stability in the hazardous waters of the Gulf, the unit is a credit to the designers and builders as well as the owners.



**LEGEND**

1. Drilling derrick
2. Access tubes
3. Piling
4. Hydraulic jacks
5. Drilling platform
6. Service platform
7. 35-ton crane
8. Heliport
9. Fresh-water tanks
10. Drilling slot
11. Piling tubes and bracing
12. Clamps to piling

# DRILLING BARGES... *One of a Series*

## THE DeLONG-McDERMOTT DRILL PLATFORM NO. 1

This unique offshore drilling platform represents a new approach to the problem of mobility plus stability in over-water operations.

Towed to sea and positioned on location, 160-ft. long 6-ft. diameter cassions are dropped through wells in the hull to the ocean floor. Then a series of jacks, each with a lifting capacity of 250 tons, "climb" the cassions, raising the 5-million lb. platform to a pre-designated height above the water.

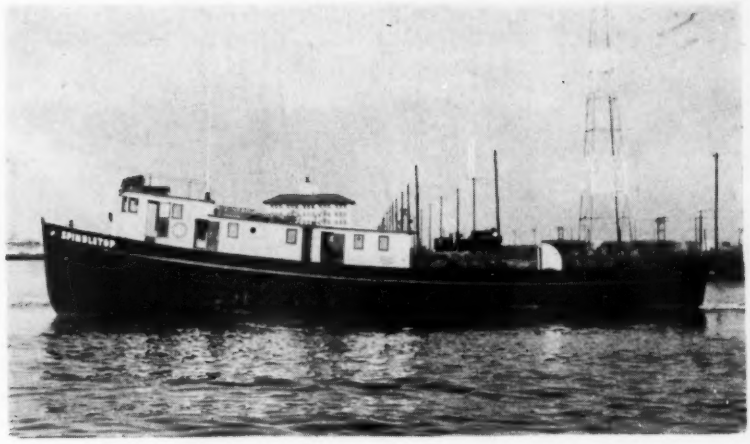
After the well has been completed the cassions are readily retracted by reversing the jacking cycle, thereby reconverting the platform into a floating barge. The unit recently set a new ocean record for shifting from one drilling location to another, completing the move from stationary platform at the previous site to re-created platform at the new location in less than 24 hours.

Now in operation in Gulf of Mexico waters off the coast of Louisiana, the **Delong-McDermott Drill Platform No. 1** is rigged for medium-depth drilling. The derrick and drawworks are located on the port side. All auxiliaries are located above deck. Fuel oil and water storage are in the hull. A 12-ft. slot allows the platform to be swung away from a completed well.

The platform measures 203′ x 70′ x 8.5′ deep, and was built by U. S. Steel at its Consolidated Western Steel Division shipyard in Orange, Texas for a joint venture by the DeLong Corp., of New York, and the J. Ray McDermott Co. of Houston.

A second unit, capable of operation in water depths up to 100-ft., is now under construction.

News from the SHIPYARDS



***Delivered to Marine Service Company***

# Burton-Built Offshore Utility Craft

**All-purpose 110-ft. class vessel designed to meet the diversified needs of both offshore exploration and production**

SOMETHING new in offshore craft —an all-purpose 110-ft. class auxiliary vessel ideally suited for exploration service or for use as a crew-cargo boat transporting rig personnel and supplies to marine drilling sites—has been designed and constructed by the Burton Construction & Shipbuilding Co., Inc., of Port Arthur, Texas.

While the idea is not new—the surplus wood hull YMS has been widely used for both exploration and production—the **Spindletop** is one of the few vessels designed and constructed specifically for this dual purpose. Outfitted and delivered Nov. 6 to the Marine Service Co., of Houston, Texas, the all-steel twin-screw vessel is now at work in the Gulf for a major oil company.

Incorporating a "V" design and double bottom construction, the **Spindletop** has special ballast features to accommodate the mounting of a multi-ton reel amidship, and more cargo-hold space and deck storage space than conventional crew-cargo boats. It is outfitted on a par with the finest offshore craft.

**The pilothouse, lounge, galley and living quarters of the SPINDLETOP are floored with oil-resistant tiling.**

**Dimensions and power** . . . In the 110-ft. class, the **Spindletop** has a moulded depth of 9.5′ and is 22.2′ wide. The deckhouse is 44′ long, and the cargo hold measures 42′ x 22′ x 7′ deep. Registered gross tonnage is 164.38 tons, and rated net tonnage is 129 tons.

The **Spindletop** is Hull No. 202 for Burton.

Powered with two General Motors 6-110 diesel engines, supplied by Stewart & Stevenson Services of Houston, Texas and developing 225 hp each at 1600 rpm, the vessel has a cruising speed of 12 mph. Shafts are 3½″ stainless steel, swinging 46″ x 36″ three blade Coolidge propellers.

**Auxiliaries** . . . Auxiliaries include two 22-kva (110-220 volt) a-c generators, Model ACK-20, powered by two 2-71 GM diesel engines; two 2-in. Model-A bilge pumps by Gould; a 12-in. Carlisle-Finch 1000 watt incandescent searchlight; Raytheon depth recorder; Apelco ship-to-shore phone; and a 6-in. Constellation compass.

Radio equipment was installed by Gulf Radiotelephone, Inc. of Houston, Texas.

The galley is equipped with all electric appliances by Westinghouse —electric stove, refrigerator and deepfreeze. The electric water heater and water fountain are also from Westinghouse.

**Accommodations** . . . The **Spindletop** has accommodations above deck for four, and below deck for fifteen crew members. There is a spacious lounge and salon for off-duty hours. The vessel is insulated throughout, and the pilothouse, lounge, galley and living quarters are floored with oil-resistant tiling. The superstructure is sheeted with mahogany plywood and trim.

**Construction** . . . Of all steel welded construction, the hull has a 5/16″ shell. Deck plating is 5/16″ and the superstructure 3/16″.

**Storage facilities** . . . The **Spindletop** has storage facilities for 12,000 gals. of water, either fresh or ballast. Normal fresh water capacity is 3,000 gals. The vessel's double bottom can be used for either water or fuel, and has a 7,000 gal. capacity. Fuel wing tanks hold 3,300 gals.

The **Spindletop** carries two 10-person life floats, and complete fire-

(Continued on next page)

**A view of the engine room. The SPINDLETOP is powered with two 6-110 GM diesel engines.**

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The SPINDLETOP, 110-ft. class offshore utility craft delivered recently to the Marine Service Co.

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fighting equipment. An identical vessel, the **Wildcat,** will be delivered to the Marine Service Co. in early December.

**History** . . . The Burton Construction & Shipbuilding Co., Inc. was formed in 1946 by Mr. O. W. Burton, Jr. Mr. Burton is president of the company. Other officers include J. C. Garner, chief engineer; J. A. Tibbetts, yard superintendent; and Curtis Moerbe, purchasing agent.

The company builds fishing trawlers, tugs, barge, ferries, crew boats and exploration vessels, and has a modern repair yard and marine railway capable of docking vessels up to 300 tons. A propeller reconditioning shop has recently been added. This offers a distinct advantage to boat operators, since Burton's is one of the few shipyards in the area where a vessel can be hauled out for repairs and undergo propeller reconditioning at the same time. After a wheel is repaired, the company has ample facilities to either store it for an indefinite period or ship it to another location.

Burton's current construction program includes a 100′ x 25′ x 12′ deep offshore utility craft for T. J. Falgout, of Galveston, which will be ready by Jan. 1. Burton also has under construction a 120′ x 30′ x 8′ deep self-propelled barge for the Twenty Grand Towing Co. of Morgan City, La. The barge, for use in the marine oilfields, will be outfitted by the owner.

## SPINDLETOP Is No. 6 For The Marine Service Company

R. L. "Red" Shibley and J. D. "Johnny" Weich put their first offshore boat in service in 1949. With the addition of the **Spindletop** to their growing fleet, the two partners —operating as the Marine Service Co. out of Houston, Texas—now have six offshore vessels working in the Gulf.

Three 104′ wood hull boats — the **Doris, Sea Master** and **Shillalah**—are on exploration duty. So is the 90′ Burton-built all-steel boat, the **Rio Bravo,** and the 106′ former Coast Guard patrol craft, the **Eagle**—a steel vessel of a type that also saw service as an icebreaker.

A second 110-ft. class utility craft, identical in design and performance to the **Spindletop,** is now under construction. The Burton Construction & Shipbuilding Co. will deliver the vessel, the **Wildcat,** to the Marine Service Co. in early December.

News from the
SERVICE COMPANIES

**From its modern plant at 1122 Gaiennie St. in New Orleans, the Byrne & Rice Supply Co. completely furnishes drilling barges, rig tenders and all types of floating equipment.**

### *The Byrne & Rice Supply Co.*

## Service To The Marine Oil Industry Is A 24-Hour Per Day Specialty

Since its inception in Jan. of 1947, the Byrne & Rice Supply Co. of 1122 Gaiennie St., New Orleans, La., has made a specialty of catering to the needs of the marine oil industry — and of backing up its sales with prompt, efficient 24-hour per day service.

Founded by J. K. Byrne and Atwood L. Rice, Jr., the company first placed stress on diesel engines, parts, and repairs and filter elements for all makes of diesels, as well as supplies for fishing and towing operations. This branch of the business has continued to grow, and Robert Spangenberg now heads up the engine sales division.

In 1951, E. L. Turner joined the firm. Since Turner had a considerable past experience in general marine gear, it was decided to expand the business to incorporate all types of heavy marine gear. As a result of this expansion program, Byrne & Rice now completely furnishes drilling barges, rig tenders, tugs and all types of floating equipment, from the bilges on through the sleeping quarters, galley, engine room and deck.

The company also handles Wallace & Tiernan navigation signal lights and fog trumpets, along with the batteries to power them. A complete stock of this type equipment is maintained, and the company has trained personnel to service and repair it — which includes "trouble-shooting" trips into the Gulf.

The company's service department operates on a 24-hour per day basis, and has complete facilities for fabricating stainless steel refrigeration units and walk-in coolers to specified space or other requirements. The sheet metal shop is also equipped to build battery boxes to house batteries for navigation signals.

## Sewart-Built 50′ Crew Boat Delivered To Robin

Delivered Oct. 29 to the Robin Boat Rental Service, of Harvey, La., was a a 50′ **Sewart Seacraft.** Built by Sewart Seacraft, Inc., of Berwick, La., the all-steel crew boat measures 50′ x 15′ x 8′ deep, with a draft of 3.5-ft. Powered with two 6-110 GM diesel engines, it has a cruising speed of 18.5 mph. Equipped with longitudinal type seats, the **Seacraft** is licensed to carry 30 passengers and has accommodations for a crew of two.


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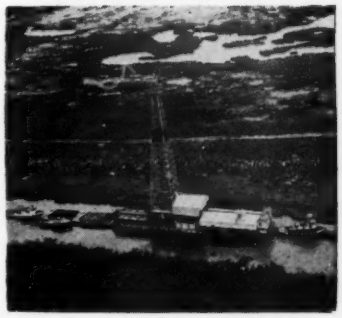

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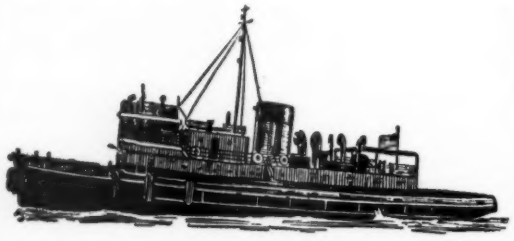

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## SUPER TUG FOR SUPER TANKERS

**The Unare,** 105' all-steel super tug built by the Gulfport Shipbuilding Corp. of Port Arthur, Texas, was delivered recently to the Mene Grande Oil Co., a subsidiary of Gulf Oil Corp. Powered with two 16 cylinder GM diesel electric motors delivering 1350 shaft hp, the tug will be used to dock the company's big tankers at a Venezuela port. The **Unare** is also equipped with a 5-ton buoy hoist and complete liquid foam fire fighting system, and will do dual duty as a buoy tender and fire boat.

During the war Gulfport built 28 YTB's (102' tugs) for the Navy. Using the basic hull design of the YTB, the Port Arthur firm has since built fifty-eight 102 and 105-foot tugs for commercial use. Gulfport has delivered to the Navy and private industry an impressive total of 86 of these powerful, rugged work boats. The Unare is the latest.

## LEASES IN FEDERAL WATERS OFF TEXAS COAST NET $23 MILLION

Washington—The Interior Department received cash bonus bids totaling more than $23 million in the Nov. sale of oil and gas leases in federal waters off the coast of Texas. Bids were submitted on 19 tracts offered, and 19 other tracts failed to attract a bid.

Standard of Texas—the first company to bring in deep-water production off the coast of Texas—submitted the highest bid for any tract. The company bid a record $4.5 million for a 5760-acre block in State Tract 37, more than fifteen miles offshore from Jefferson County, Texas in the High Island area. The bid ($792 per acre) topped the $3 million payment by the Gulf Oil Corp. for a 5760-acre block last December.

Magnolia submitted the highest per acre bid—$2,209 per acre—for a 1440-acre lease in State Tract 18 in the High Island area. Magnolia's lease attracted the greatest number of bids—ten companies and combines submitted competitive bids.

Ninety bids were received in all. All of the leases offered were well beyond the 3 league, or 10.5 mile limit. The lowest bid received was $16.30 per acre for a 5760-acre block off the coast of Mustang Island. Only six individual companies or combines submitted high bids —Continental, in combination with Atlantic and Tide Water; Tide Water and the Atlantic Refining Co.; Phillips; Gulf; Standard of Texas, and Magnolia.

**For Christmas — give a subscription to OFFSHORE OPERATIONS**

BOB BOWMAN

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# General Marine Corporation Features "Boatel" Service

## Business increase brings three new executives into Harvey, La., firm

SOMEONE at the General Marine Corporation in Harvey, La., revealed remarkable ingenuity with the invention of the phrase **"Boatel" Service.** Nothing could be more descriptive of the company's activities.

General Marine does contract feeding and housekeeping for the oil industry on a turnkey basis — furnishing cooks, mess-men, bedroom stewards, food, and cleaning and sanitary supplies for marine operations of all kinds. Currently, the catering firm is handling more than twenty-five jobs between the Missisippi River and Brownsville, Texas. This includes offshore drilling operations, geophysical crews working from quarter boats in the marshes, geophysical boats doing offshore work, and a number of drilling barges operating inshore.

Since General Marine initiated its feeding and housekeeping program less than two years ago, rapidly expanding activities in the Gulf has brought an increased demand for its service — so much so, in fact, that the company, has opened a branch office in Houston and added three new executives to its staff to handle the growing volume.

Bob Bowman has been placed in charge of the Houston office. In his early thirties, Bowman has grown up in the food business, and is a specialist in food management and problems related to personnel management and customer relations.

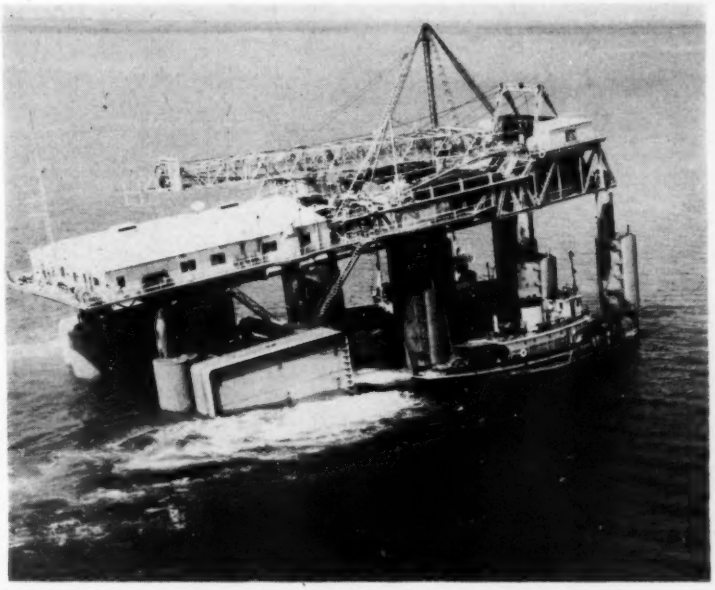
Richard Dixon, formerly catering manager of the Schenley hotel in Pittsburgh, Pa., has joined the Harvey office of the firm. Dixon is a graduate of the Cornell School of Hotel Management.

The third staff addition, according to an announcement by Wallace M. Taylor, president of the General Marine Corp., is Lee Santiago. Santiago is now field manager for Louisiana operations, and has a background of twe!ve years as port steward for the Gulf & South American S. S. Co. of New Orleans.

By furnishing its complete turnkey service, General Marine relieves the toolpusher and drilling superintendent of added responsibility on an offshore job. And the company has always backed up its **"Boatel" Service** with properly trained personnel. At the firm's Harvey, La., office, a galley and dining room are maintained where new cooks are checked out before they are put into the field.

General Marine has achieved a remarkable record in personnel turnover by use of a probationary plan. Each new employee is either given a raise, or released, at the end of three months. The same procedure is followed at the end of six months. As a result of this program, the turnover of men who have gone through the six months' probationary training is currently running under five percent. In fact, since the company's inception three years ago, it has been found necessary to release only three men from field work who have gone through the six months' probationary training.

Backing up its **"Boatel" Service,** General Marine has always been insistent on top quality supplies for every job it has undertaken. The company is currently completing work on brand specifications to further assure that nothing except top quality food will be delivered for its use.



**General Marine services the drill barge MR. CHARLIE, shown being positioned on location off the coast of Louisiana.**

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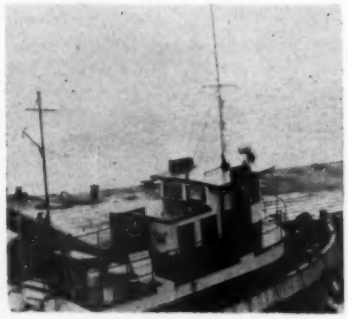

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## OFFSHORE EXPLORATION

(Continued from page 13)

The hazard grows when those men deliberately detonate certain quantities of that substance as part of their work. Fortunately, the explosives manufacturers have available some rather insensitive "powders" (ammonium-nitrate base) which require a "booster" or semi-catalytic agent to cause detonation. Nevertheless, as the Texas City catastrophe proved, similar compounds CAN explode accidentally. Therefore, a very high degree of care is exercised on all offshore units. Carefully engineered shooting procedures are followed, with every step planned to render virtually impossible a repetition of those explosive accidents which have occurred offshore in the past. It is an interesting commentary on psychology to note that, with the ultimate price of carelessness so high, safety regulations enforce themselves very efficiently among shooting-boat personnel.

The foregoing are only a few of the many steps that must be taken, the problems which must be solved, to locate those offshore wells. Add these to geological and geophysical interpretation problems, to leasing problems, to marine engineering problems, to oceanographic problems — then you will have some idea of how far that airline pilot strayed from accuracy.

### Glasscock Barge Will Drill Louisiana Test For Halbouty

Michel T. Halbouty has made location for the No. 1 State Lease 2206, Lake Barret, Assumption Parish, La., and the C. G. Glasscock Drilling Co. of Corpus Christi, Texas, has the contract to drill it. A Glasscock drilling barge will take the test to 13,000 feet, to test the lower Miocene.

Location is about two and one-half miles northwest of the nearest production in the East Lake Barret field. It is 3000 feet southwest of a duster drilled recently by Stanolind. The wildcat will be Halbouty's first marine operation.

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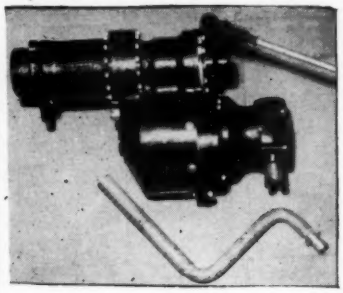
In the Breton Sound area, Block 49, Kerr-McGee and Western Natural will drill the No. 1-A State Lease 2129 exploratory test to 12,000-ft. Location is northeast of the Main Pass Block 35 field.

---

The California Co. has made location for a 14,000-ft. wildcat off Plaquemines Parish, La. The company's No. 1-A State Lease 1069 is in the West Delta Block 30 area.

**INERTIA STARTERS!**



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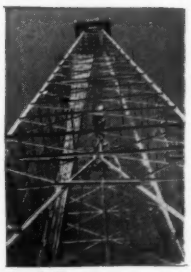

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***F. E. McClanahan***

# The Man Behind Rental Tools, Inc.

F. E. McClanahan, president of Rental Tools, Inc., of Harvey, La., is a big, solid citizen who has little use for halfway measures. Take his record as a wildcatter. It is consistent, to say the least.

He has drilled nothing but dry holes.

Big Mac was born in Hogtown, Texas, in 1904. A little later the more sedate town-folk got together and changed the name of the place to Desdemonia. This was about the time of the boom in 1919, when Mac got his start in the oil business. As a shirt-tail young'un, he packed a water jug on a pipeline. Since everything was done by hand, pipeliners in those days did a lot of sweating and hollering for water — so Mac and his jug got around.

He had barely tucked his shirttail in (he was seventeen), when he started dressing tools on a cable-tool rig drilling near Desdemonia. The big bits, stem and crackers were going way down — 1800 to 3000-ft. Mac moved to Ranger and Eliasville, and wound up in Borger in 1925 as a driller.

He ran a filling station in Fort Worth for a time, but once you've monkeyed around the oil business, your blood is usually tested for gravity rather than type, and in the early 30's he closed shop and headed for East Texas. Dad Joiner had made his big strike and while Mac didn't get in on the drilling, he ran a refinery for a while near Gladewater. In '34 he moved on to West Texas, and in '35 and '36 was around Hobbs, New Mexico. The rig had changed — it was rotary now — but he was still a driller. He worked for the Arrow Drilling Co. and for Carl B. King.

In 1938 Mac moved again — to Illinois. He went into the workover and deepening business. But if he was ever going to find oil on his own, he figured it would be in Texas. In '41 he came back to Houston, and (depending on your viewpoint) wound up with a wildcat record nobody can beat. The holes, as stated, were all dusters. Bone-dry.

There was a war on and in '42 he entered the army. He was with the ordnance department, and served a part of his hitch in Europe. He was discharged in '44 with the rank of sergeant.

For about a year he worked for Standard Oil of California. A driller again, and on the West Coast. In '46 he came back to Houston and went to work for Jimmy Gray in the rental tool business. He started his own business in Harvey in '48 — Rental Tools, Inc. He has been at the same address ever since. By 1954 he was doing so much business offshore that he formed a new company, Service Contracting, Inc., to handle service calls from marine rigs.

Service Contracting, Inc. does workover and furnishes offshore labor, including casing crews. The company now has about 140 men working in areas such as Bay Marchand, Main Pass and Grande Isle.

Another concern, the McClanahan Company, handles rental of buildings and commercial property in and around Harvey. Mac's younger brother, R. C. McClanahan, is associated with him in all three firms.

With its tremendous potential, F. E. McClanahan foresees a vast expansion and development program as related to offshore resources within the next few years. The oil is there, and a lot of it has been found. But the costs are terrific. Oil companies are currently spending money at the rate of several thousand dollars per hour in the Gulf.

That's a little too rich for any wildcatter's blood — even one of Big Mac's tenacity. So he drilled his last four dry holes in McMullen County, Texas.

There's a story behind that, too. Back at Hogtown, just after the turn of the century, the McClanahan boys' father had a big front yard for them to cow-trail around over. Something like 20,000 acres, in fact, lying in Erath and Eastland counties. So it's always been Mac's ambition to own an outfit of his own. A few years ago, he acquired a 9,000-acre ranch in the mesquite lands north of Laredo, Texas. He raises a few cattle, but mostly he keeps the ranch as a place to entertain friends. There are a lot of deer, quail and turkey in that part of Texas.

Every chance he gets, he likes to slip down there and get in some hunting and fishing. And maybe — just maybe — size up a lease some'eres.

That next un' might not be dry!

## Magnolia Has Gas-Distillate Discovery Off Iberia Parish

Magnolia Petroleum Co. has announced a new gas-distillate discovery in the Eugene Island Block 110 area off Iberia Parish, La. The company's No. 2-F State Lease 680 tested 2,862,000 cubic feet of gas with forty-one barrels of distillate on a 17/64-in choke from perforations at 9690-9700.

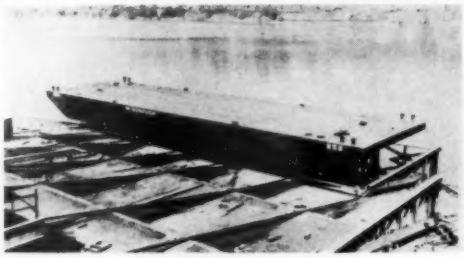
## Calco Stakes West Delta Test

The California Co. has made location for a wildcat in the West Delta Block 51 area off Plaquemines Parish, La. The company's No. 1 State Lease 2548 is approximately two miles west of production in the Block 52 area, and will be drilled to 12,000 feet.

**Shown on a deer hunt at the McClanahan ranch, near Laredo, Texas: Gene Bennett, J. Ray McDermott & Co.; Joe Homer and Jim Hugg, Humble; Chester Lewis, Rental Tools; Simon, cook's assistant; Leon Alvez, cook; Carl Phelps, Humble; Alvino, cowboy; Earl Harder, Calco; and F. E. McClanahan.**

**Steel Barges For Charter**

**Oil — Deck — Water**



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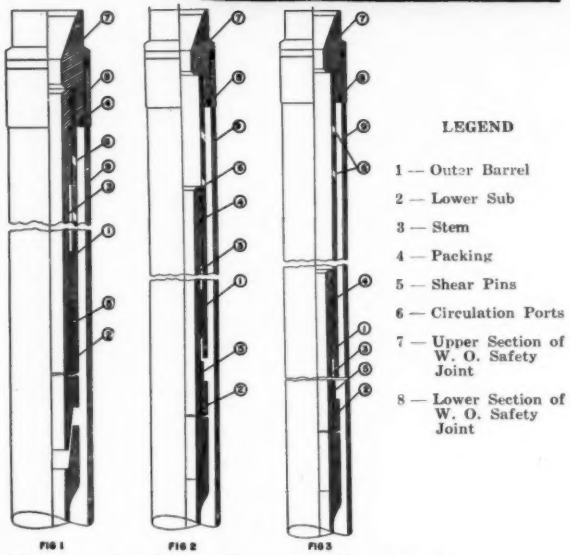

LEGEND
1 — Outer Barrel
2 — Lower Sub
3 — Stem
4 — Packing
5 — Shear Pins
6 — Circulation Ports
7 — Upper Section of W. O. Safety Joint
8 — Lower Section of W. O. Safety Joint

FIG 1  FIG 2  FIG 3

## F. J. & W. Backoff Tool For Tubing and Drill Pipe

The French Jordan and White Backoff Tool is designed to expedite recovery of stuck tubing or drill pipe in an economical, safe and practical manner. Complete washover and recovery of a section of the fish can be made with only one round trip. Instead of cutting off the fish, the fish is backed off at the lowest practical free point after washing over, thus saving a round trip and a joint of pipe. While the fish is fully engaged, the drill or work string and washover pipe can be rotated, raised or lowered, and full circulation of drilling mud or fluid is maintained.

**General information** . . . The French Jordan and White Backoff Tool incorporates the use of a washover, full opening safety joint located at the upper end of the washover pipe and having a top connection to connect to the drill or work string, and a bottom connection to connect to the washover pipe. The lower end of the upper section of the washover safety joint is threaded to receive the upper end of the backoff tool assembly (See Figure I).

The F. J. & W. Backoff Tool is thus placed inside the top joint of washover pipe and is held in retracted position by means of shear pins.

**Operation instructions** . . . After the section of fish is washed over completely, the backoff tool is in position to engage the top of the fish by means of a tool joint pin or other device. After the fish is engaged as in Figure II, an upward strain on the work string will shear the pins and further upward movement will cause the spline inside the lower end of the barrel to become disengaged from the clutch on the upper end of the lower sub and place the circulation ports above the packing elements.

When the fish is engaged the work string and washover pipe can be rotated, raised and lowered approximately six feet, and circulation of drilling fluid through the annulus between the fish and washover pipe is maintained while preparing to run backoff shot.

Further upward strain on the work string will extend the backoff tool to its fullest length, the stem telescoping

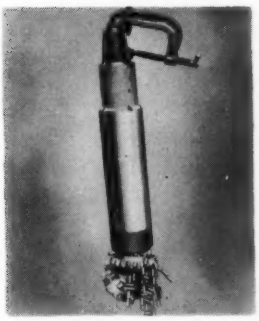
out the bottom of the barrel and the splines in the lower end of the barrel engaging the clutch located immediately below the packing element near the top of the stem as in Figure III. The operator can then apply the desired torque for backing off with any approved backoff shot. After the backoff is successfully executed, the fish is brought out of the hole inside the washover pipe.

**To remove work string and washover pipe from hole** . . . Should the attempted backoff be unsuccessful and conditions make it necessary to remove the work string and washover pipe from the hole, an upward strain and right hand torque will cause the stem to disengage the lower sub by means of a left hand thread, allowing the work string, wash pipe and backoff tool to be free, leaving only a tool joint pin screwed into the top of the fish.

Should the washover pipe become stuck while the backoff tool is in neutral position as in Figure II, the washover safety joint is disengaged in the usual manner and inasmuch as the fish is already washed over, it can still be backed off at the lowest practical free point with the use of a backoff shot, leaving no fish inside the washover pipe.

**Manufacturers** . . . The F. J. & W. Backoff Tool (patent pending) is manufactured by French Jordan and White Fishing Tool Service, Inc., of Harvey, La.

## Magnetic Basket



An innovation in the Milwaukee Magnetic Basket enables the operator to cut off all circulation through the basket before leaving bottom. This eliminates the jetting effect of the fluid at the end of the magnet which would tend to wash off the fish. Circulation is cut off by dropping a steel ball into the drill string and bringing up fluid pressure slightly to speed its descent. The ball seats in the tool and mud drains off through small ports above the ball, preventing a wet pulling job. Tools available in sizes from 4½ in. through 10 in. MILWAUKEE TOOL & ENGINEERING CO., INC., 208 E. Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Wisc.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# The Slush Pit...

An eighty-year-old playboy married a girl of twenty or so. Above all else, he wanted a son. So he went to his doctor and explained his ambition.

"I'm sorry," said the doc. "You may be heir-minded, but you aren't heir-conditioned."

---

The athletic young man was doing push-ups in the park very early in the morning. A drunk, weaving his way home, paused to watch him. After a suitable lapse of time, he rambled over and tapped the athlete on the shoulder.

"Shay," he shayed. "Maybe you don't know it, bub—but your girl's gone home!"

---

A pedestrian is merely a man whose wife beat him to the car.

---

Rhumba: Footloose and fanny-free.

---

A certain oilman hauled a character into court and had him charged with lifting his wallet. "I'm guilty, your honor," the defendant confessed. "Please give me a sentence and a divorce, too."

"Why a divorce?" inquired the judge.

"Because," said the defendant, "all I found in that wallet were three pictures of my wife!"

---

"Mary: "Did you have a good time on your date last night, Ruth?"

Ruth: "No, darn it—I've got too much will power!"

---

One fellow told his doctor he didn't want to get well because he was in love with his nurse.

We heard later that he didn't. The nurse was the doctor's wife.

---

Stripteasers: Girls who are unsuited for their work.

---

Driller: "What is that in your pocket, Sam?"

Roughneck: "S-s-sh. They're dynamite caps. Every time the toolpusher comes by, he slaps me on the chest and breaks my pipe. Next time he'll blow his fool hand off!"

**"And just HOW will this help me get elected 'Queen of Oil Convention,' Mr. Smith?"**

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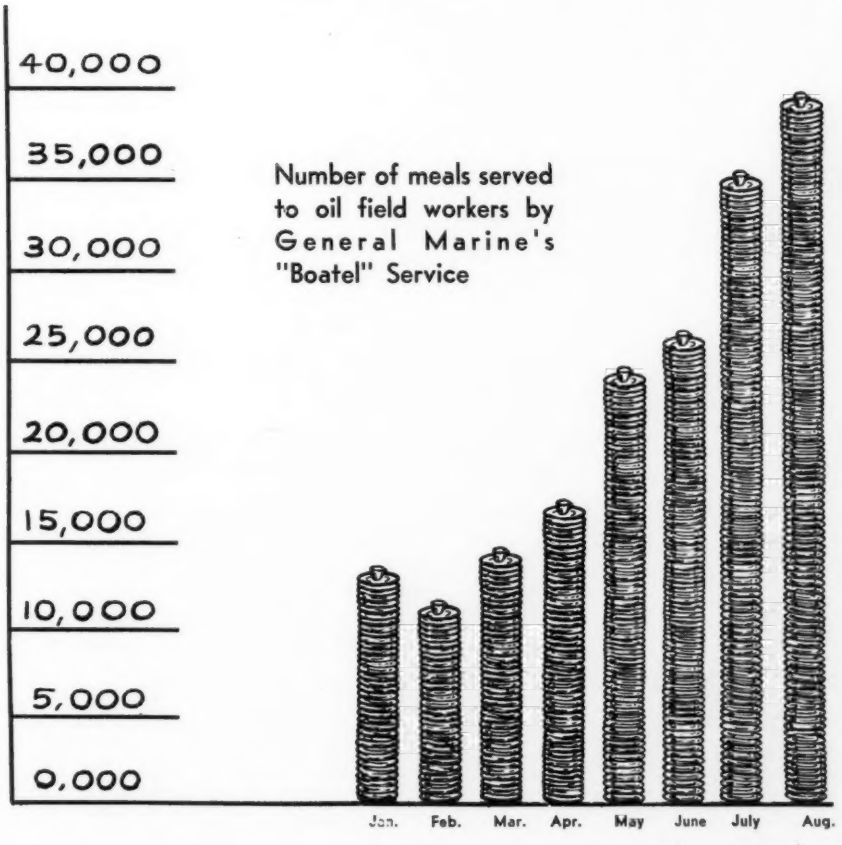


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